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SFP 1 8 2003



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Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Leslye Corsiglia

Dale Foster

SUBJECT: THE HAVEN

DATE: September 16, 2003

Approved <

Date

9.17.03

INFORMATION ONLY

Eighteen months have passed since the The Haven began year-round operation as an emergency living facility for San Jose residents who find themselves victims of fire, flood or other natural disasters. This information memo provides an update on The Haven's success.

The concept for this innovative program was generated by the City's Fire Department to provide transitional accommodations for those whose lives have been impacted by a disaster. A collaboration between the City of San José Fire and Housing Departments, the Emergency Housing Consortium (EHC) and the American Red Cross-Santa Clara Valley Chapter (ARC), The Haven has successfully housed 17 families to date.

BACKGROUND

In 1998, the Redevelopment Agency acquired the property at 937-943 Locust Street from the Center for Employment Training. At the time of acquisition the property consisted of a tri-plex and a vacant SRO building that was designed for shared housing for up to 13 people. On April 10, 2001, the City Council and Redevelopment Agency Board approved the transfer of this site from the Redevelopment Agency to the City for affordable housing use, and on June 5, 2001, the City Council approved a PD Rezoning of the property to provide emergency transitional housing for up to 20 victims of fire or other natural disasters. Rehabilitation of the property began in late January of 2002 and the grand opening of the Haven was celebrated on March 26, 2002.

The site of a former convent, the Haven is a large, fully furnished house designed to provide sleeping accommodations, living essentials and amenities to ensure that each family's stay is as comfortable as possible. In addition to a resident manager's unit, the Haven consists of four fully furnished apartment units, with private bedrooms and bathrooms. The facility also has a shared living room, including a shared kitchen stocked with food, a dining area, a computer room, and recreation area and laundry facilities.

EHC began operations and property management of the Haven in April of 2002. The agency is responsible for general maintenance and security with daily office hours to provide assistance

HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

Subject: The Haven September 16, 2003

Page 2

and support for residents as they work through their transition. ARC provides referrals of families to the Haven, disaster relief intervention, toiletry, towels and linen vouchers for families upon their move-in, and assigns a case manager who works with each family to move into stable housing. Families are permitted to stay rent free at the Haven for up to 30 days. Extensions to this guideline can be made on a case-by-case basis through coordination between EHC's property management staff and the American Red Cross's case management team. Upon having located new permanent housing, clients may access clothing, transportation vouchers, and assistance with the first month's rent at their new residence, if needed.

To date 17 families, with a total of 60 occupants, have taken residence at the Haven. Thirty of the occupants have been children. Families ranged in size from one to seven members. Seventy-six percent (76%) were first-time homeless. Fifty-eight percent (58%) of the families included employed heads of household. One hundred percent (100%) were low, or very-low income households. Twenty-nine percent (29%) of the households included extended family members including parents, their children, and grandchildren.

The average length of stay was 25 days. Four families had extended stays beyond the 30-day threshold because they were unable to quickly locate permanent housing. In every instance, additional housing search assistance from EHC and ARC staff proved beneficial to finding permanent housing. Households have stayed a total of 422 days at the Haven over the past year.

When catastrophe such as a fire, flood or other domestic disaster strikes families in our community, many victims have the option of seeking refuge with family or friends. Prior to the opening of the Haven, the housing component of ARC's disaster relief assistance program had been restricted to offering up to 14 days of hotel vouchers for individuals and families. In more recent times, the Red Cross has been providing three days of hotel vouchers. This time period at a hotel often gives displaced families sufficient time to secure stable housing, especially those with homeowners' or renters' insurance. However, not all families or individuals have such insurance or other resources to carry them through this difficult period, especially low and very low-income families. The Haven provides an additional unique option for families living in San José who are experiencing an unforeseen tragedy.

Attached for your information is a brochure that is distributed by fire fighters as they are out in the community.

DALE FOSTER
Acting Fire Chief

LESTYE CORSIGLIA Director of Housing

Attachment



